During the last year *i.e.* 1999, total four proposal for collection/ mining of rubbles and sandstones were submitted by the State Government from the said eight hilly districts under Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Out of these four, three are under consideration of the Ministry and one proposal has been rejected on 8.10.1999 as the proposed activity would affect wildwife and its movement in that area. However, on the request of State Government for re-consideration, certain map/information has been asked from the State Government.

Threat to Forests by Growing Population

1433. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that as per report of the United Nations Population Fund-India, presented on World Environment Day, the growing population, changing life style pattern, as well as poverty threaten our forests;

(b) whether forest cover declined from 72 mil. hectares in 1987 to around 63 mil. hectares in 1997;

(c) whether even, though the decline has been checked, the quality of our forests continue to deteriorate; and

(d) if so, what action Government have taken on this report?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. The forest cover of the country has declined from 64.08 million hectares to 63.72 million hectares in the period from 1981—1983 to 1995—98.

(c) Yes, Sir. However, as per the State of Forest Report, 1999, a marginal improvement of density of forests has been observed in the period 1995 to 1998.

(d) Various important actions taken by the Government for conservation and development of forests are as under:

(i) Afforestation programmes are undertaken by State/UT Governments from their own resources as well as with financial assistance from Government of India.

(ii) Externally aided projects are being implemented for development and preservation of forests.

(iii) Guidelines to all State/UT Governments to involve village communities in protection and regeneration of degraded forests.

(iv) Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 has been enacted to regulate the diversion of forest lands.

(v) A net work of protected areas has been established.

(vi) Recently, Ministry has prepared a National Forestry Action Plan to enhance the contribution of forestry and tree resources for ecological stability and people centered development through improvement in investment for conservation and development of forest resources.

Forest Cover of NER

1434. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the total geographical forest vegetated area of North Eastern Region State-wise;

(b) the total area now properly used by forest department and total area remaining barren State-wise;

(c) the forest area used for shifting cultivation State-wise; and

(d) the total area of dense forests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) State-wise details of forest cover and degraded forests as per State of Forest Report 1999 are as under:

(Area in sq. km.)

State	Forest cover	Degraded forest
Arunachal Pradesh	68,847	11,091
Assam	23,688	9,171
Manipur	17,384	11,448
Meghalaya	15,633	9,708